



# NOAA FISHERIES

## Marine Recreational Information Program

*NOAA Fisheries collects recreational fishing data through our Marine Recreational Information Program. This state-regional-federal partnership develops, implements, and continually improves a national network of recreational fishing surveys to provide estimates of recreational catch and effort. The large-scale surveys administered through MRIP provide one of the only sources of regionally consistent recreational data and long-term trend information covering many species.*

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# Estimating Recreational Catch: The Access Point Angler Intercept Survey

From Maine to Mississippi and in Hawaii, NOAA Fisheries administers the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey to collect catch-per-trip data from anglers fishing from shore, private boats, and for-hire vessels. To conduct the APAIS, specially trained state samplers visit marinas, boat ramps, beaches, piers, and other public fishing access sites and survey anglers as they complete their fishing trips. State agencies coordinate in-person, on-site data collection, while regional fisheries information networks provide additional operational and quality control support.

### What information do field interviewers collect?

During each interview, state samplers record:

- Location
- Mode of the angler’s trip (e.g., shore, private or rental boat, or for-hire vessel)
- General area where the angler fished (e.g., inland, state territorial sea, or federal Exclusive Economic Zone)
- Species, number, and disposition of the angler’s catch (e.g., observed harvest, reported harvest, or released alive)
- Where possible, length and weight of harvested fish

Interviewers play no role in law enforcement, and must keep the personal information anglers share confidential.

### What happens to the information anglers share?

Data from our catch surveys are combined with data from our effort surveys to produce an estimate of total recreational catch. These estimates are combined with commercial catch data, biological research, and information collected from direct observations of fisheries to help stock assessment scientists assess the health of fish stocks. Through a public process that includes angler input, fisheries managers use these assessments to set fishing regulations that support sustainable fisheries for future

generations. Once our estimates have been produced and reviewed, we provide access to them by placing them in a publicly accessible database on our website.

### How does this survey benefit me?

Our understanding of saltwater recreational catch depends on complete and accurate data provided by recreational anglers. Taking a few minutes to share information about your fishing trip is one of the most important contributions you can make to fisheries management, and the sustainability of our resources.

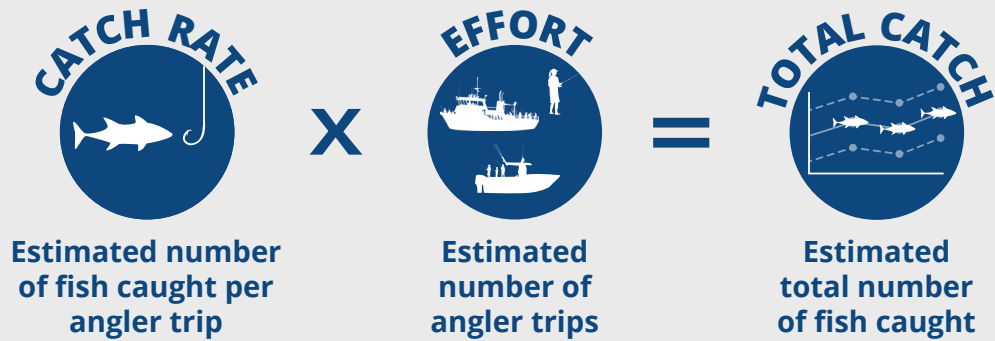
### How are field interviewers assigned to sites?

Field interviewers are assigned to visit public fishing access sites during specific days and time periods. We use standard statistical methods to select sites that will produce an efficient and representative sample of fishing trips.



Photos: NOAA Fisheries

## How is Total Recreational Catch Estimated?



A suite of additional programs collects information about fishing effort and large pelagic fishing activity. The estimates we produce from our surveys are broken out by state, region, fishing mode (shore, private boat, and for-hire vessel), and fish species. Estimates are made publicly available on our website.

### What is an interviewer's daily assignment like?

Field interviewers conduct surveys during all times of day, and work the entire length of their six-hour assignment, night or day, rain or shine.

### Why do interviewers work at sites where fishing activity is low?

We sample sites at different rates based on fishing pressure levels, or the estimated number of anglers we expect to be at the site on a given day or time. We send interviewers to sample high-activity sites more frequently, but include low-activity sites to help obtain a representative sample and capture variation in fishing activity. If we only sampled at sites with high fishing activity, the samples would be skewed.

### Why do interviewers survey anglers who didn't catch any fish?

Our sample needs to be representative of all saltwater fishing trips, regardless of how many fish, if any, were caught. If we only sampled trips where anglers caught fish, our catch estimates would be biased (and likely too high).

### Why do interviewers survey anglers who are visiting from out of town?

Interviewing both resident and non-resident anglers helps our sample be as representative as possible of all saltwater fishing trips. If we didn't use the APAIS to gather information from out-of-state residents, we wouldn't be able to account for the fish those anglers catch or the trips they take.

### Why does it matter what one angler reports, and how can you count my fishing if I've never been interviewed?

The success of our surveys relies on the participation of the people we sample. Because it's not practical or possible for us to intercept

each of the millions of recreational anglers fishing along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, and Hawaii, each trip we do sample may represent dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of trips. Sample surveys allow us to draw reasonable conclusions about the full recreational fishing community.

### Why should I participate more than once?

Even if you've been surveyed before, the unique characteristics of your current fishing trip—such as the date, time, and place where you fished, or the species you caught—haven't been incorporated into our data. No two fishing trips are alike.

### How do you evaluate the quality of your estimates?

While no statistical surveys are free of errors, our staff practices extensive quality assurance and control measures before our estimates are published. This includes checking for errors in data entry and investigating any unusual changes in trends for high-interest, rare-event, and federally managed species. As part of our commitment to continuous evaluation and improvement, we regularly conduct research on our existing methods of data collection and pursue improvements to our survey designs.



Photo: Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection